

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks in an Exchange With Reporters in Hebron, Kentucky
January 4, 2023

The President. I've got good news for you: They just elected you Speaker. [Laughter]

[At this point, the President pointed to Reuters White House Correspondent Steve A. Holland.]

Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell

Q. Hey, what did you and Senator McConnell talk about in the limo ride?

The President. We talked about foreign policy, about Ukraine, about keeping everybody together—not in the Congress, but just internationally.

The President's Travel Plans

Q. Are you going to be visiting the border when you head down to Mexico?

The President. That's my intention. We're working out the details now.

National Football League Safety Concerns

Q. Do you think the NFL is getting too dangerous?

The President. No. Look, the idea that you're going to have—look, you've got guys that are 6'8", 340 pounds running a 4.8 40. I mean, you know, you hit somebody with that kind of force—now, that's not what happened here.

But I just think it's a—I don't know how you avoid it. I don't—I think working like hell on the helmets and the concussion protocols—that all makes a lot of sense. But it's—you know, it is dangerous. You've got to just acknowledge it.

Q. [Inaudible]—China is handling COVID?

House of Representatives Vote for Speaker

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned about the implications of there not being a functioning House of Representatives at this point?

The President. Well, obviously, I am. In terms of—I'll put my hat on here.

For two reasons. One, it's embarrassing for the country. I mean, literally. Now, I'm not making a partisan—it's just the reality is that, you know, to be able—have a Congress that can't function is just embarrassing. We're the greatest nation in the world. How can that be?

And we've had a lot of trouble with—I'm sorry for the noise—a lot of trouble with the attacks on our institutions already. And it just—that's what worries me more than anything else.

Ukraine

Q. What about Bradley Fighting Vehicles for Ukraine? Is that on the table?

The President. Yes.

Q. How soon?

China/Coronavirus Prevention Efforts

Q. Are you worried about how China is handling COVID right now?

The President. Well, yes, I am. But I think we've just got to make the protocol we set out: that if you're flying from China, you've got to be tested and so on.

China has not been—I know they're very sensitive about—when we suggest they haven't been that forthcoming.

Q. Thank you, sir.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. Thanks, everybody. Thank you.

Senate Minority Leader A. Mitchell McConnell

Q. Mr. President, can you talk about the significance of having Mitch McConnell here with you today? And——

The President. Well, that's for all you to decide.

Q. And—[laughter]—and how you——

Q. No, but for you——

Q. ——and how your relationship will be—will—how the relationship will matter in this next Congress with House Republicans being what they are?

The President. Look, I've had a relationship with Mitch McConnell for years. And when, in the Obama administration, they were going to—weren't going to pay the debt, you know, McConnell and I stayed up, as you remember, on New Year's Eve night until—you know, late at night to finish it.

I've—we've always been able to work together.

All right, thank you very much.

Press Secretary Jean-Pierre. Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. on the tarmac at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport prior to boarding Air Force One.

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